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Kansas Speaks Spring 2015 Statewide Public Opinion Survey

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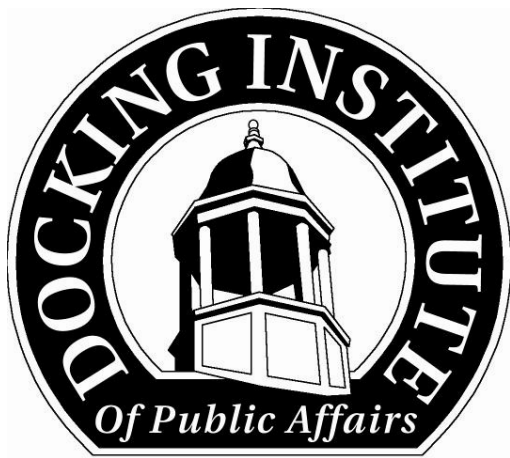
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Kansas Speaks
Spring 2015
Statewide Public Opinion Survey

Prepared For
The Citizens of Kansas
By
The Docking Institute of Public Affairs
Fort Hays State University

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Mission:

To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its
University Center for Survey Research are dedicated to
serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

Kansas Speaks 2015



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In pursuit of
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Executive Summary

- High concern for the economy and potential threats to the welfare of respondent's families are indicated by the survey, with 41% saying they were "very concerned" and 70% saying they were at least "somewhat concerned" that the Kansas economy will seriously threaten them or their family's welfare.
- When respondents were asked specifically what they would do to close the impending budget deficit, one-third of respondents said they would cut spending, one-sixth would increase tax revenues and the remaining half would utilize both strategies to balance the budget.
- Those respondents who indicated they would cut spending to balance the budget were then asked whether they would cut spending in each of the three categories of expenditures. Just over half said they would cut spending for roads and highways, while only one third would cut spending for social services. Public education was the least popular area for cuts, with only one sixth of respondents favoring this option.
- Respondents who said they would raise tax revenues to balance the budget were then asked whether they would raise each of the three main types of taxation. The most common response was to raise sales tax, with two thirds favoring this strategy. Over half indicated a desire to raise property taxes, while only one fourth of respondents wanted to increase income taxes.
- When asked about taxation on four commonly cited categories of taxpayer, two thirds of respondents wanted to raise taxes on the top income earners and three fourths wanted to raise taxes on corporations. The most common opinions regarding the middle class and small businesses were to either decrease or keep taxes the same for these two categories.
- Regarding the adopted policy to fund Kansas public schools with block grants, as opposed to the funding formula formerly in place, half of respondents opposed the block grant system, while just under one third favored it. Well over one fifth of respondents were not sure how they felt.
- A follow up question on public school funding asked respondents whether they thought the courts or the legislature should have the ultimate authority to determine a "suitable" level of state funding to K-12. Half of respondents indicated they thought this was the purview of the legislature, while only one third said the courts should have this authority. One sixth did not indicate a preference.
- Respondents were asked whether they supported or opposed Kansas expanding Medicare eligibility under provisions of the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare. Of those responding, 58% supported expansion, while 42% opposed expanding Medicare under the Affordable Care Act.
- Two thirds of those responding favored increasing consumption taxes on cigarettes, while almost as many (62%) favored increasing the consumption tax on alcohol.

- When asked about marijuana policy, over two thirds of respondent favored allowing medical marijuana in Kansas, while almost as many (63%) favored decriminalizing recreational marijuana so that personal possession would only involve a fine, rather than jail time.
- Two thirds of respondents opposed removing protections for teachers and administrators who are sued by parents for using classroom materials to which the parents think are harmful for the children to be exposed. Five percent of respondents indicated that they “aware of” cases where teachers presented lewd, obscene or otherwise unsuitable materials in the classroom.
- Fifty six percent of respondents said they opposed the use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in Kansas.
- When asked if legal gun owners should be allowed to carry concealed weapons in Kansas without first obtaining training and certification, three quarters of respondents indicated they opposed this policy.

Introduction and Methods

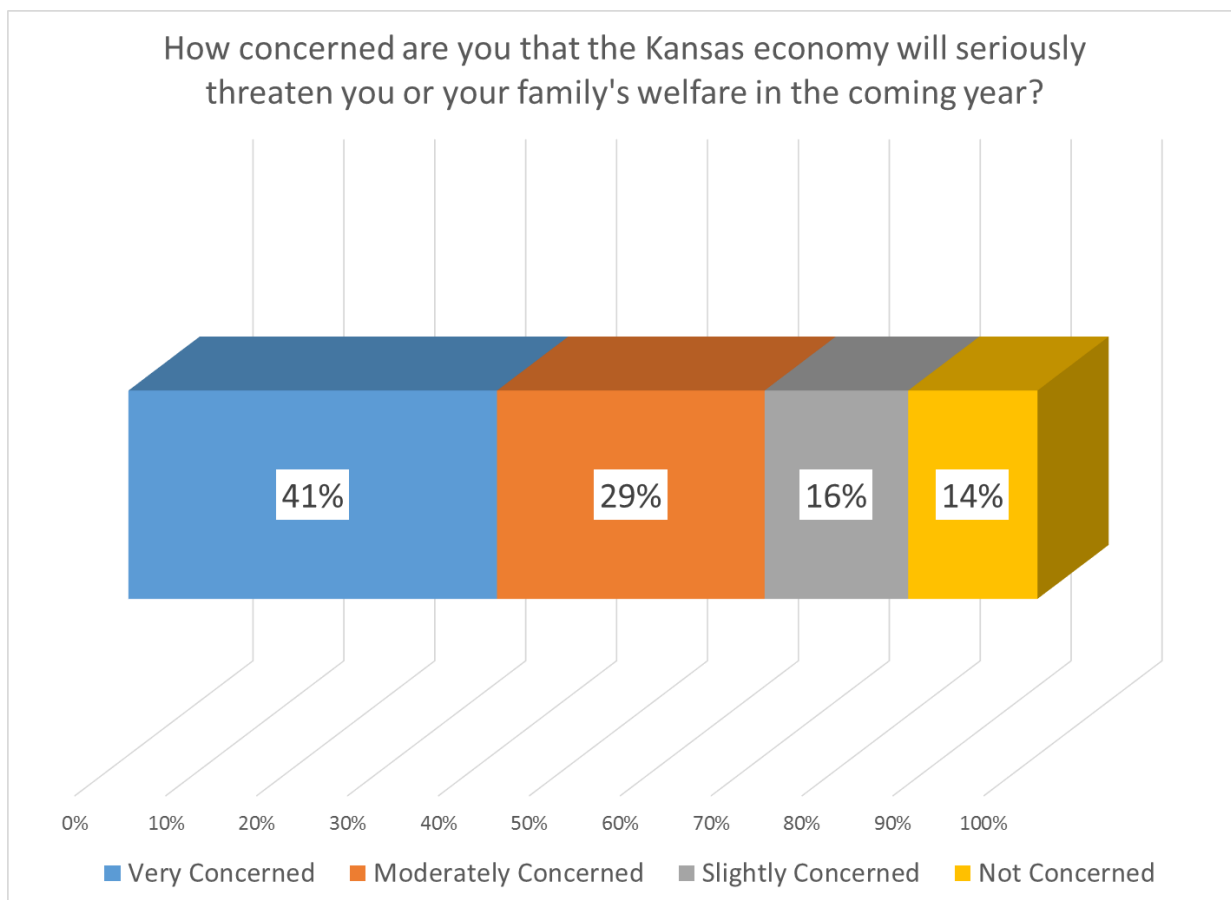
The Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University surveyed a random sample of adult residents of Kansas age 18 and older to assess attitudes and opinions regarding various issues of interest to Kansas citizens. The survey sample consists of random Kansas landline telephone numbers and cellphone numbers. From March 23 to April 1st, a total of 1,308 Kansas residents were contacted through either landline telephone or cellphone, and 519 of them completed the survey, resulting in a 40% response rate (519/1,308). At a 95% confidence level, the margin of error for the full sample of 519 is 4.4%. A margin of error of 4.4% means that there is a 95% probability that findings among the sample vary no more than +/- 4.4% from the value that would be found if the entire population of interest (adult Kansas residents) were surveyed, assuming no response bias. The percentage of males and females in the sample were similar to the Kansas population.

Analysis

Section 1: Economy and Kansas Budget

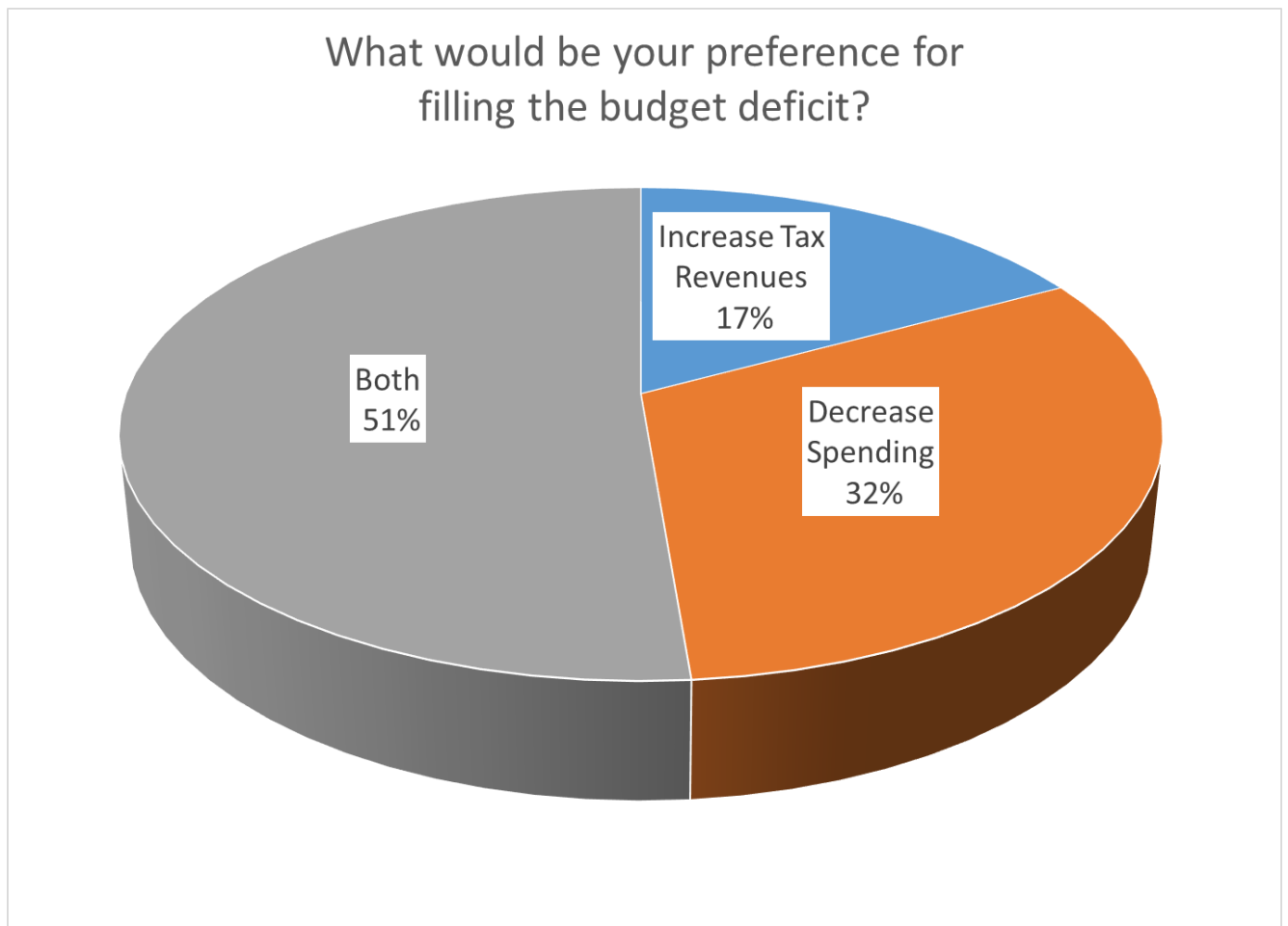
Respondents were asked how concerned they were that the Kansas economy would seriously threaten their personal or their family's welfare in the coming year. Figure 1 shows that about seventy percent of respondents indicated that they were "very concerned," or "moderately concerned." Forty one percent said they were "very concerned" that the Kansas economy will seriously threaten their family's welfare, up from 32% in fall of 2013.

Figure 1



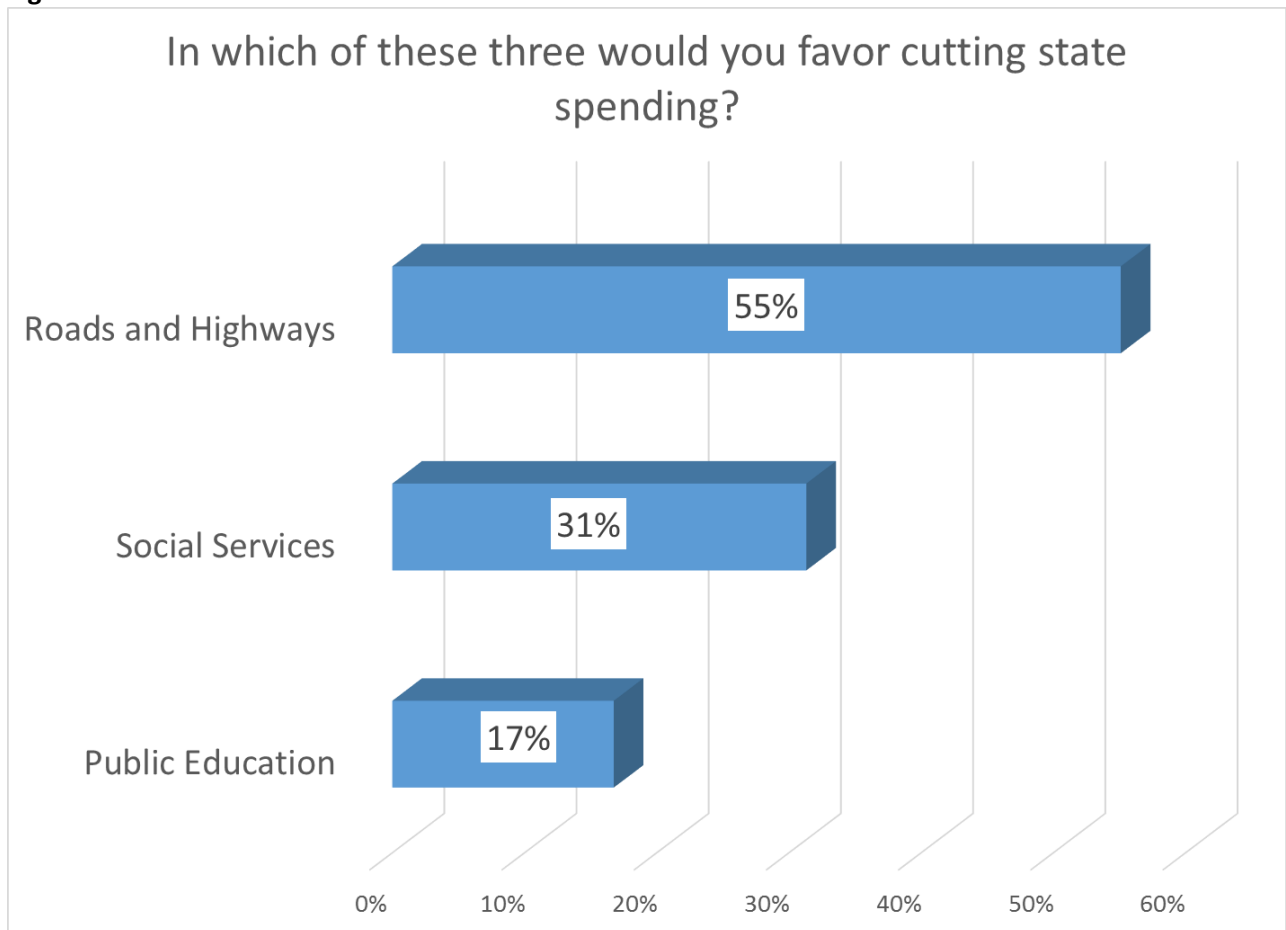
Most Kansans are aware of Kansas' budget deficit and that there are two main ways to balance the budget; either decrease spending or increase revenues. Figure 2 shows the results from asking respondents for their preference on filling the budget deficit. Over half of respondents (51%) preferred both increasing tax revenues and decreasing spending. About one-third of respondents (32%) preferred solely decreasing spending and about one-sixth (17%) preferred only increasing tax revenues.

Figure 2



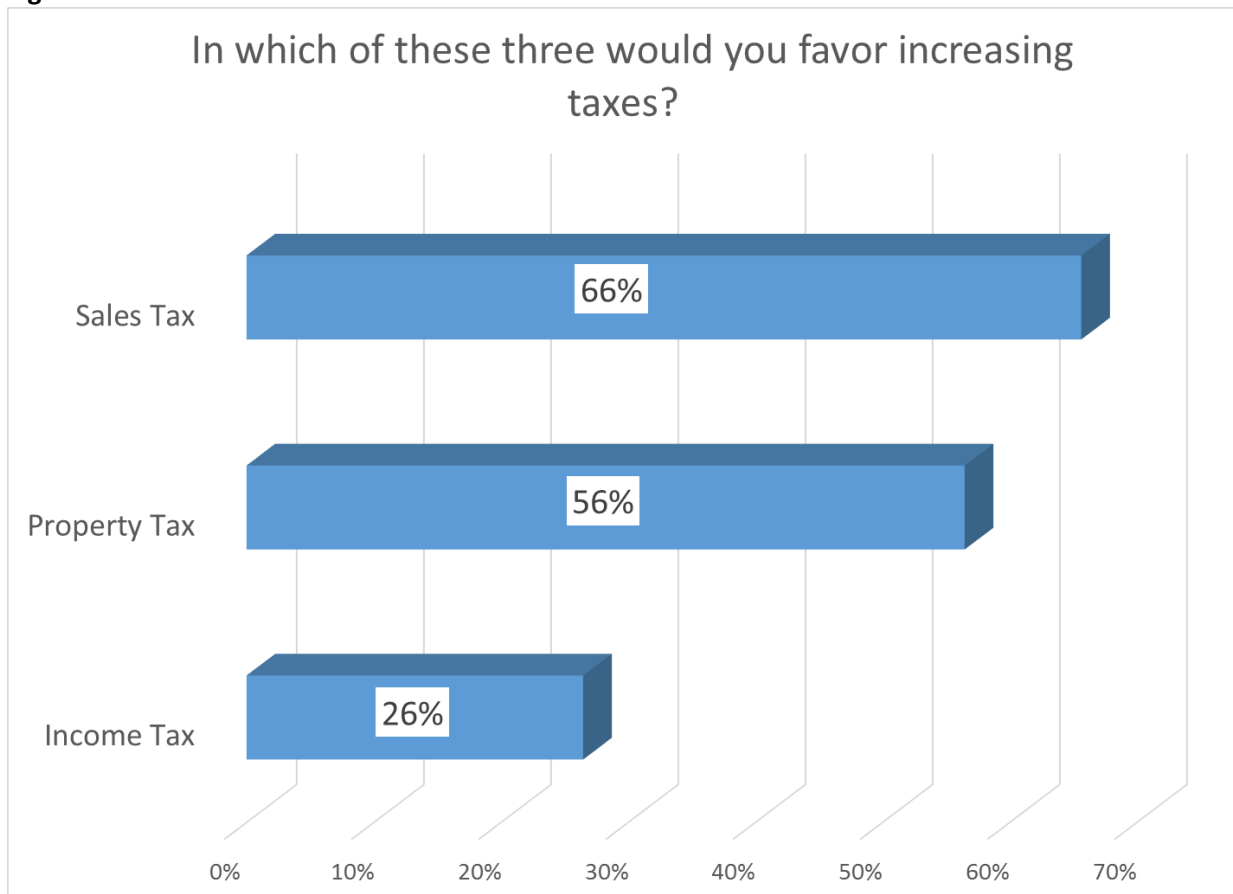
Respondents who indicated they were in favor of cutting state spending were asked whether they would cut funding in each of the three areas of spending. Figure 3 shows that over half (55%) of respondents preferred cutting spending on roads and highways, while about one-third (31%) preferred to cut spending on social services. Only one fifth (17%) of respondents preferred to cut funding for public education.

Figure 3



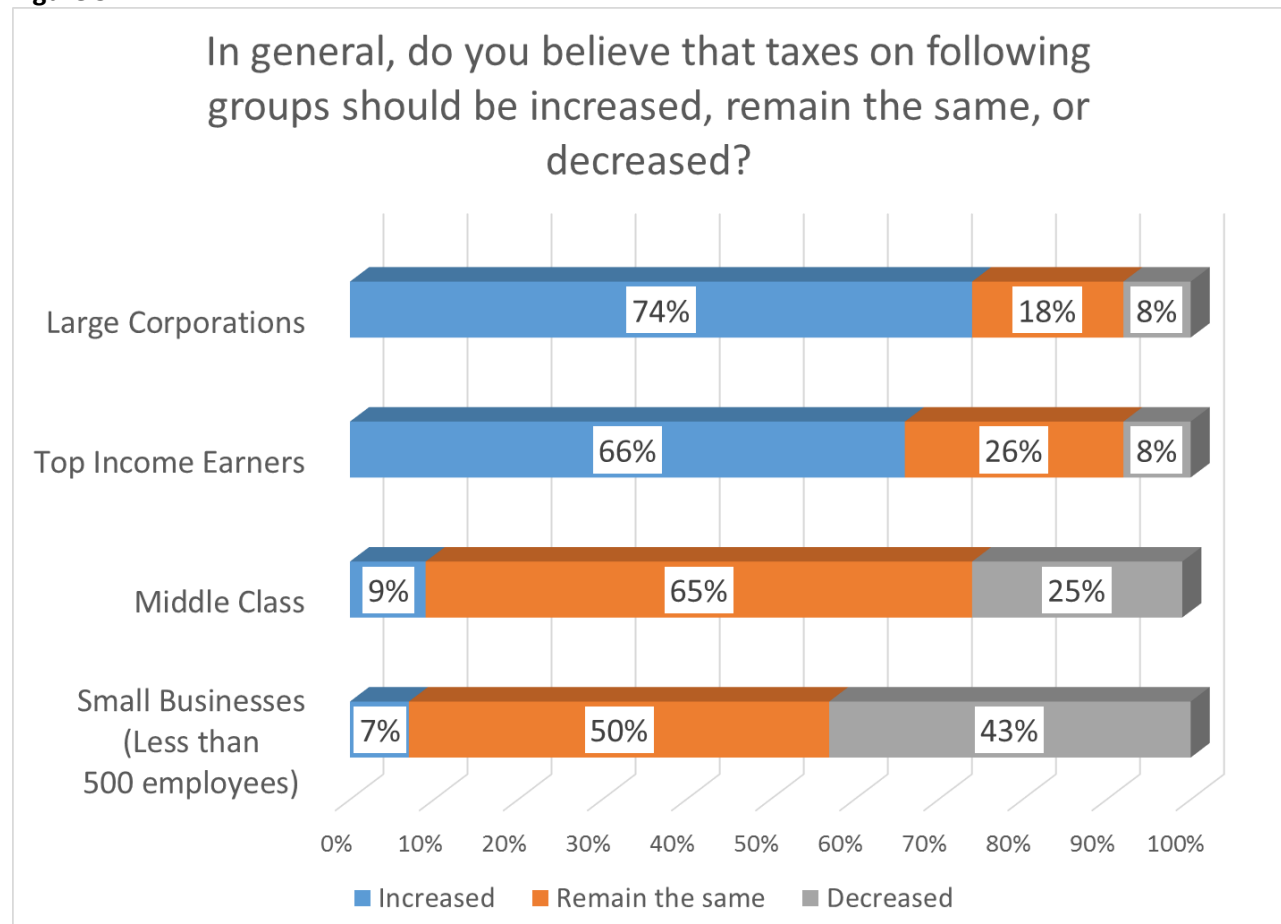
Respondents who favored an increase in taxes were asked whether they would increase taxes in each of the three main revenue sources. Figure 4 shows that two thirds (66%) of respondents indicated a preference for increasing sales taxes. Over half (56%) favored increasing property taxes. Only about one-fourth (26%) wanted to increase income taxes.

Figure 4



Tax increases and reductions can be targeted at different types of people or businesses. Respondents were asked their opinions about tax increases and reductions targeted at four common categories of tax payers. Figure 5 shows that about three-quarters (74%) of those responding believed that taxes on large corporations should be increased, while two-thirds (66%) believed that taxes on the top income earners should be increased. The vast majority (93%) of those who responded said taxes on small businesses should remain the same (50%) or be decreased (43%). Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents felt taxes on the middle class should remain the same (50%) or be decreased (43%). Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents felt taxes on the middle class should remain the same (50%) or be decreased (43%). Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents felt taxes on the middle class should remain the same (50%) or be decreased (43%).

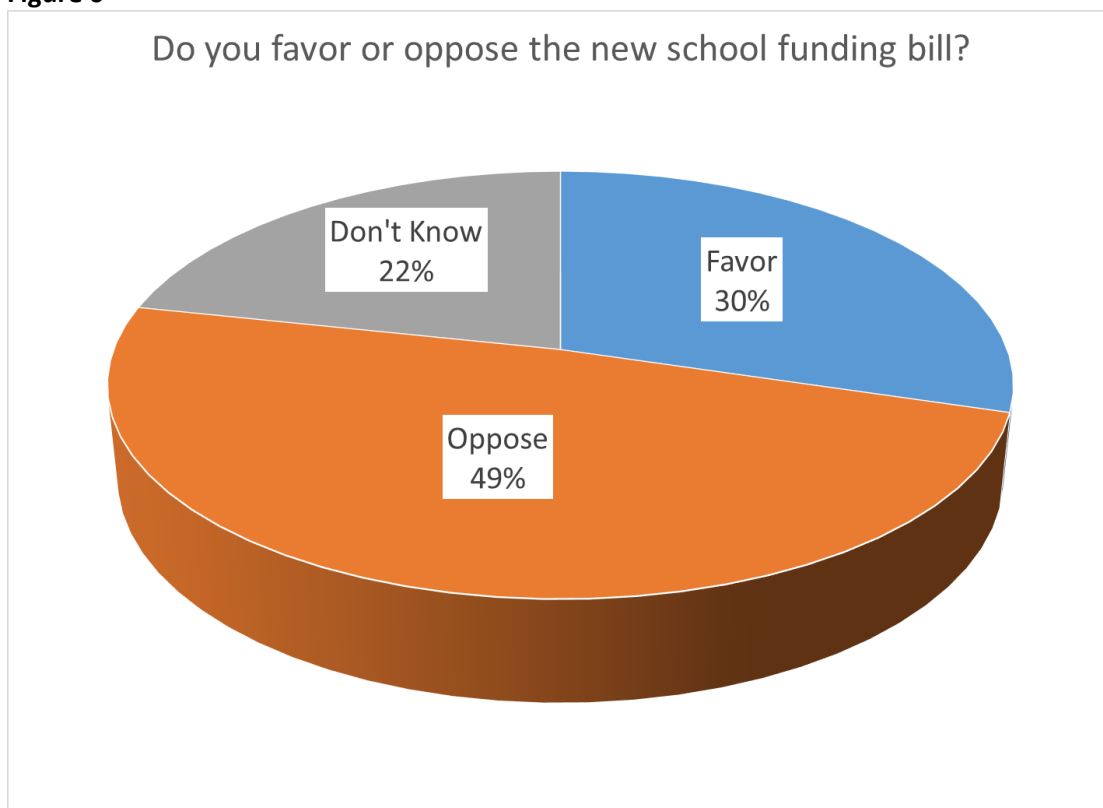
Figure 5



Section 2: School Funding

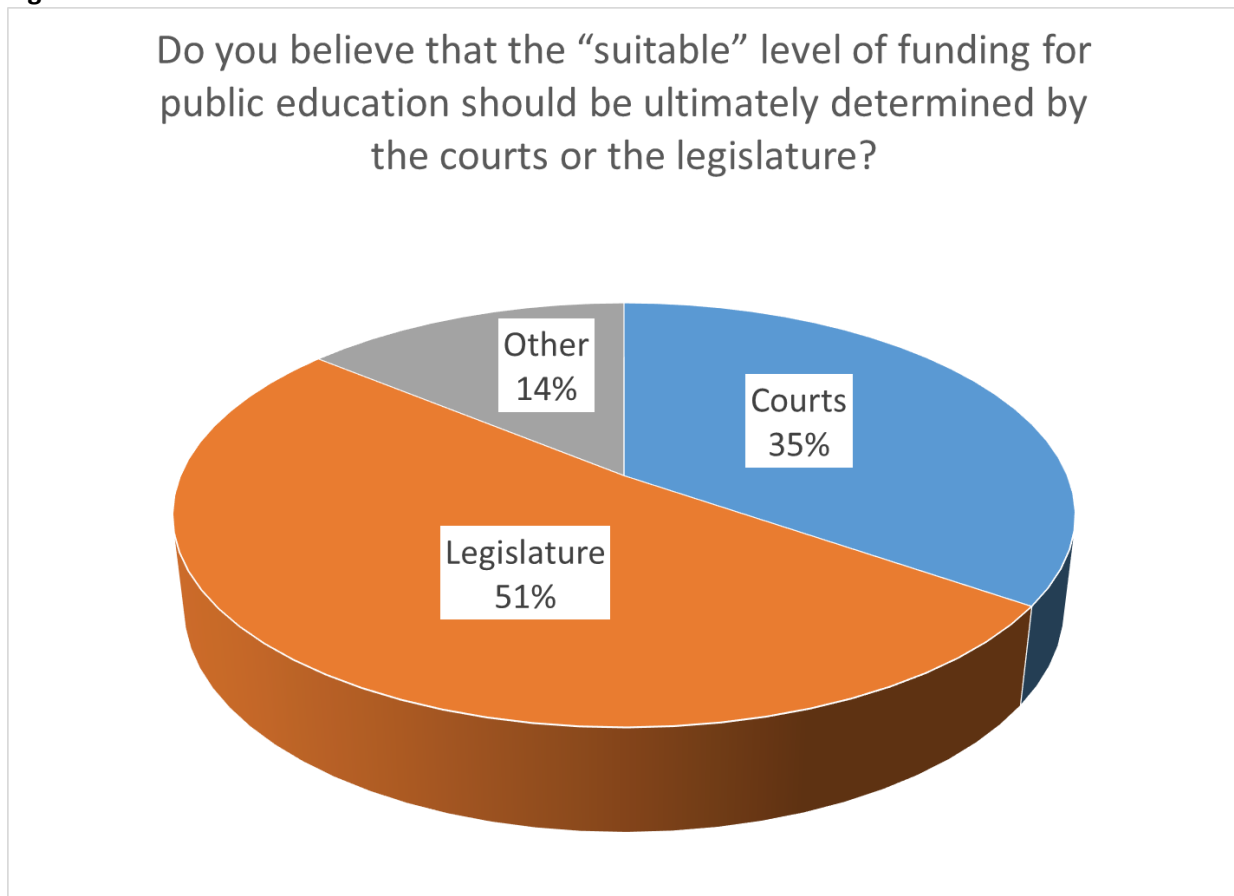
The Kansas legislature recently passed a school funding bill that will replace the current school funding equalization formula with block grants for two years, while the state attempts to create a new funding formula. Respondents were asked whether they favor or oppose this new school funding bill. Figure 6 shows that almost half (49%) of respondents were opposed to this new bill, while just under one-third (30%) supported the bill. The high proportion of “Don’t Know” responses (22%) suggests that the issue is very complex.

Figure 6



The Kansas legislature and courts have been debating over who has the authority to determine the “suitable” level of state funding for public education. Respondents were asked who they thought should have the final say. Figure 7 shows that over half (51%) of those respondents sided with the legislature, while only about one-third (35%) favored giving the courts this power. Some respondents (14%) offered more non-traditional suggestions for making this decision.

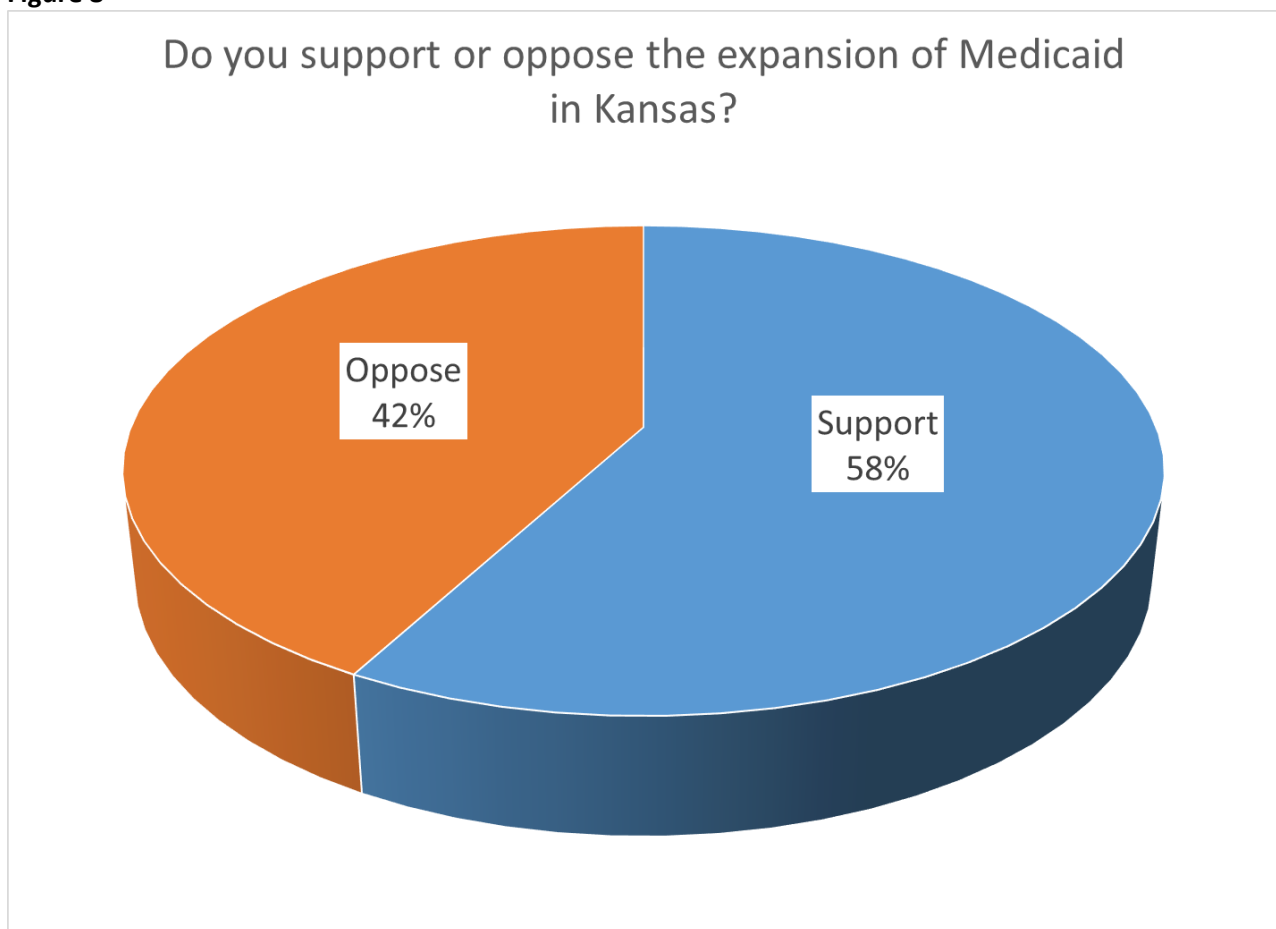
Figure 7



Section 3: Public Policy Issues

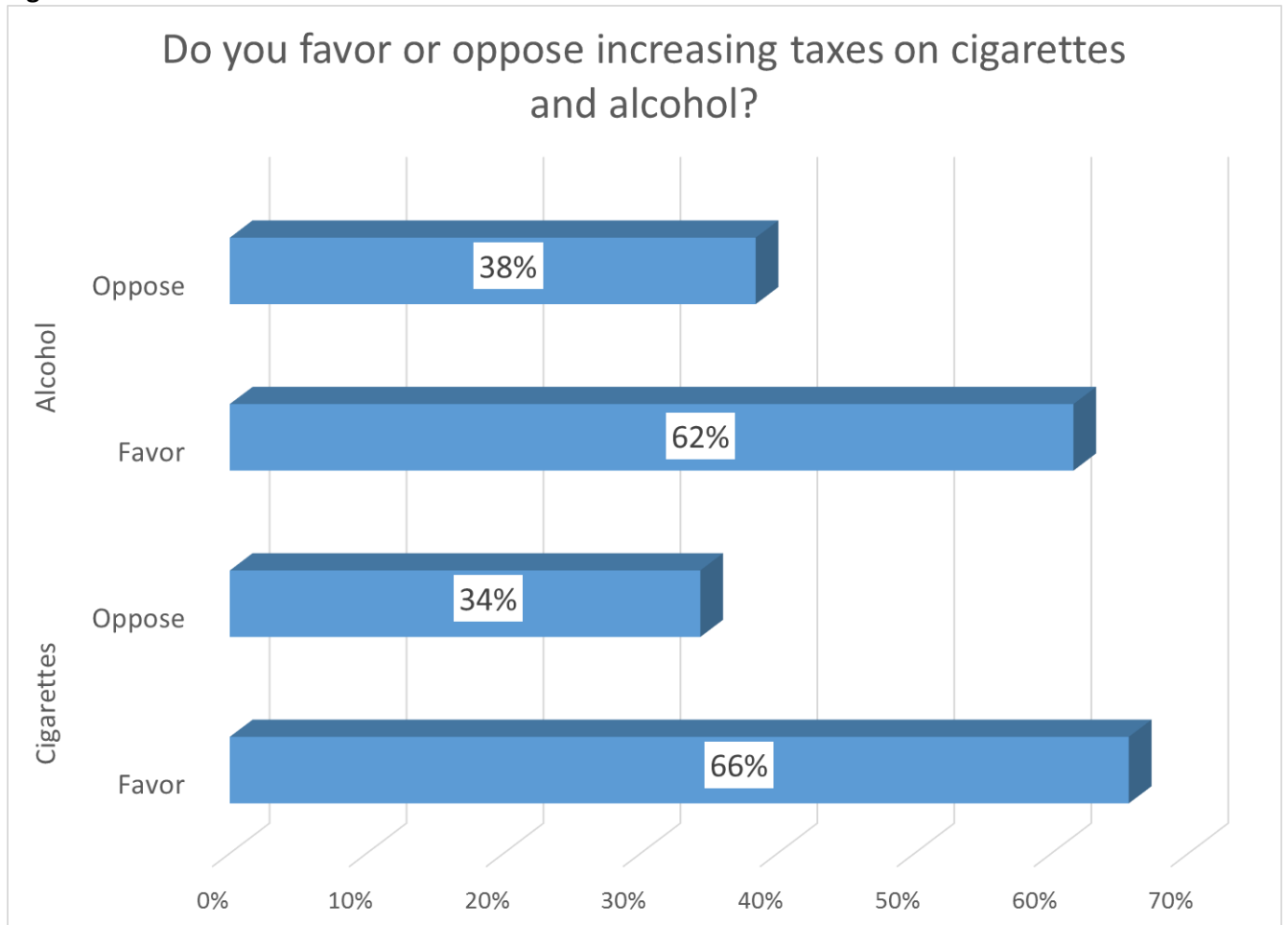
Along with several other states, Kansas made the decision not to expand Medicaid under a provision of the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare. Critics contend that this decision has denied Medicaid eligibility to a number of Kansans currently without health insurance. Figure 8 shows that well over half of those who responded (58%), support the expansion of Medicaid, while forty-two percent opposed expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

Figure 8



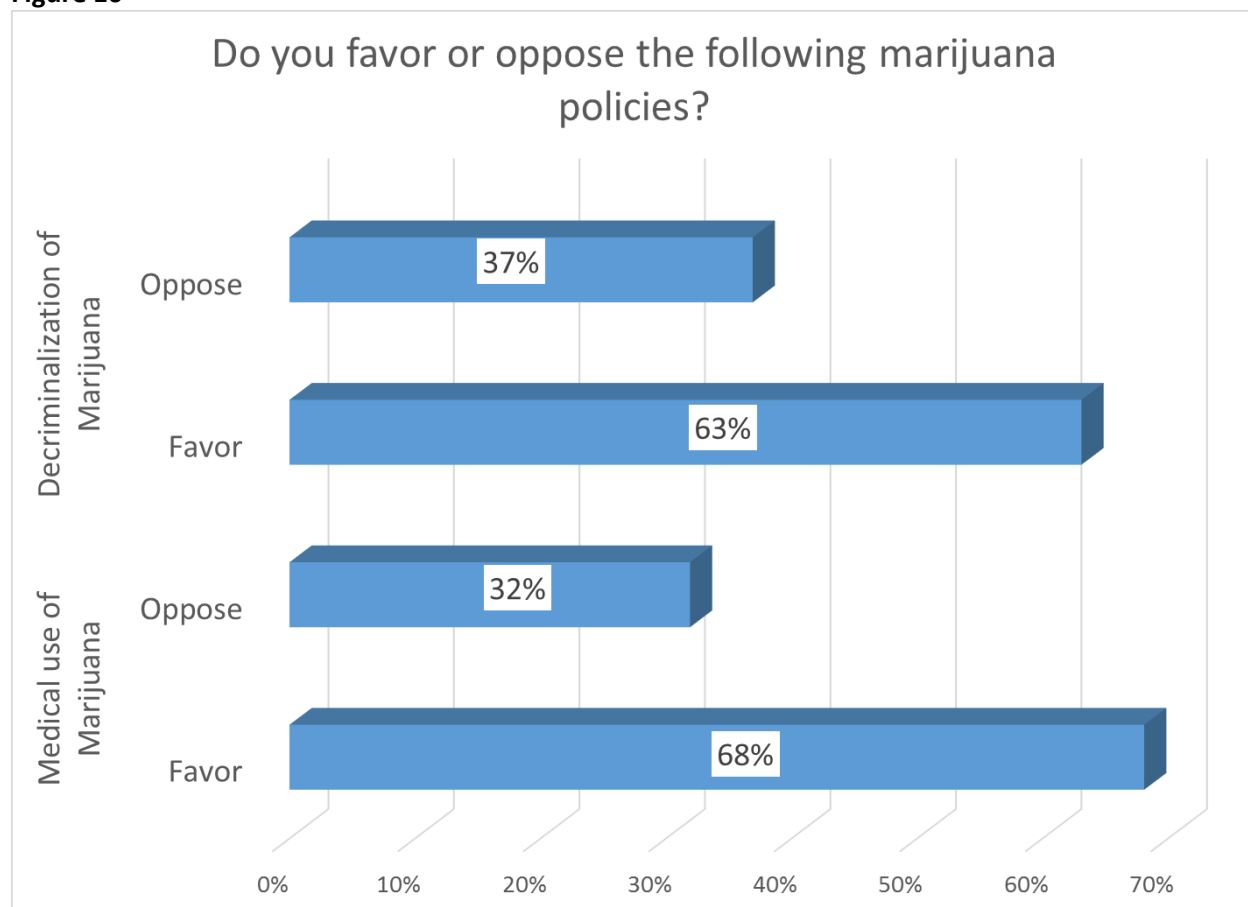
One way to raise revenues is through consumption taxes on products thought by some to be either immoral or hazardous to the user and/or general public, commonly called “sin taxes.” Figure 9 shows strong support among respondents for increasing the consumption taxes on alcohol (62%) and cigarettes (66%).

Figure 9



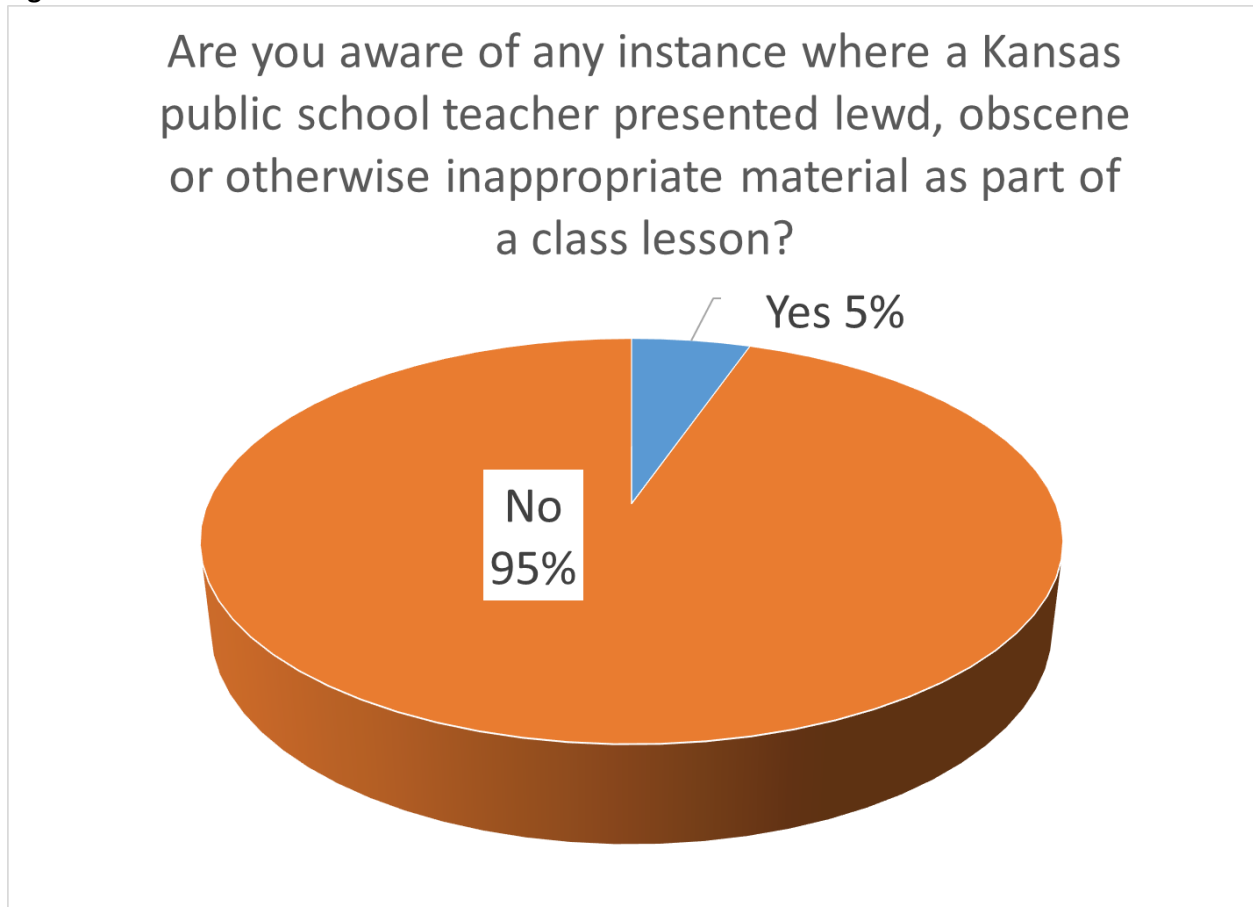
Some states and municipalities have recently decriminalized or reduced the penalties for the possession of limited quantities of marijuana. Figure 14 shows that, when asked about recreational marijuana, almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) favored decriminalization of possessing personal amounts, whereby violators would be fined instead of subject to jail time. Because marijuana has been found to be therapeutic for some medical conditions, many states now allow physicians to prescribe marijuana for medicinal purposes. Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents favored allowing Kansas physicians this option.

Figure 10



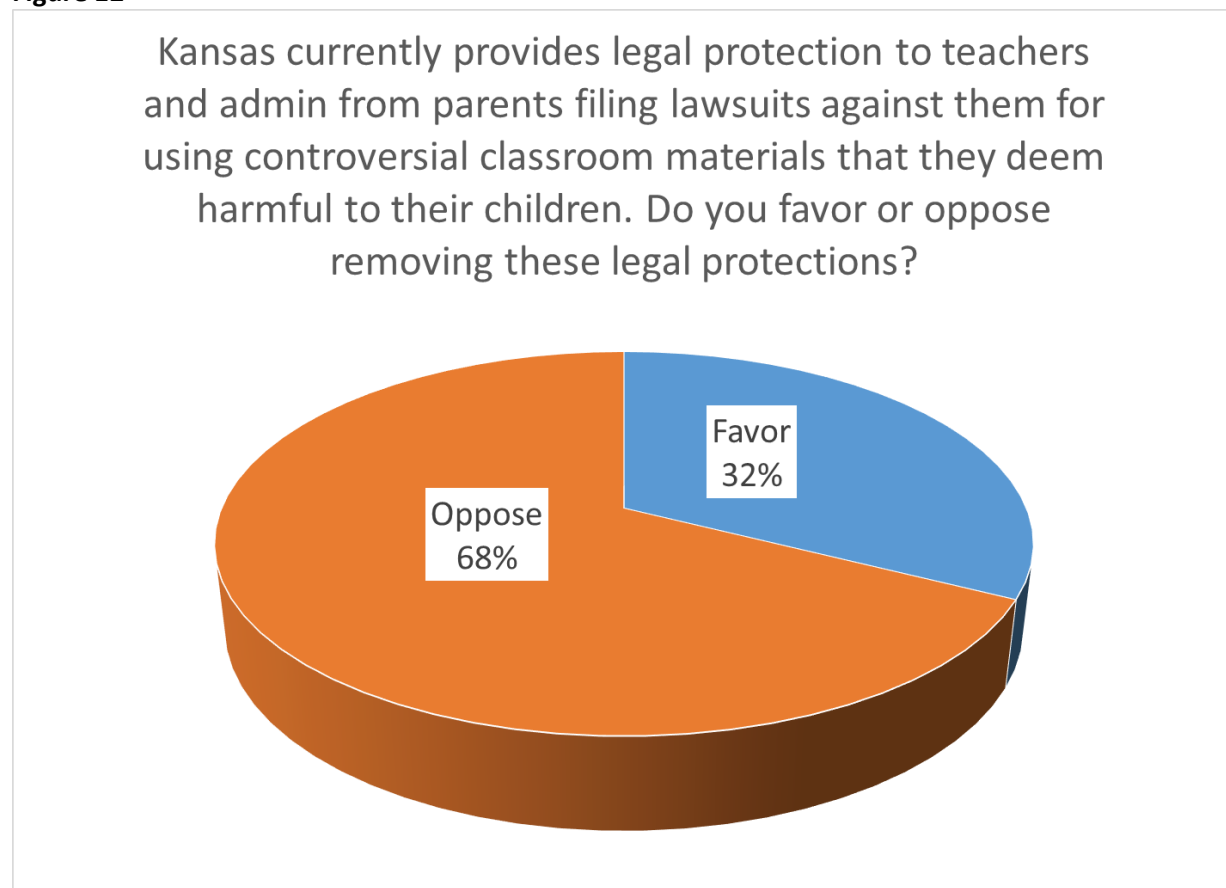
Respondents were asked if they were aware of any instance where a Kansas public school teacher presented lewd, obscene, or otherwise inappropriate material as part of a class lesson. Figure 11 shows that nearly all respondents (95%) reported that they were not aware of any such instances. Very few (5%) said they were aware of one of these instances.

Figure 11



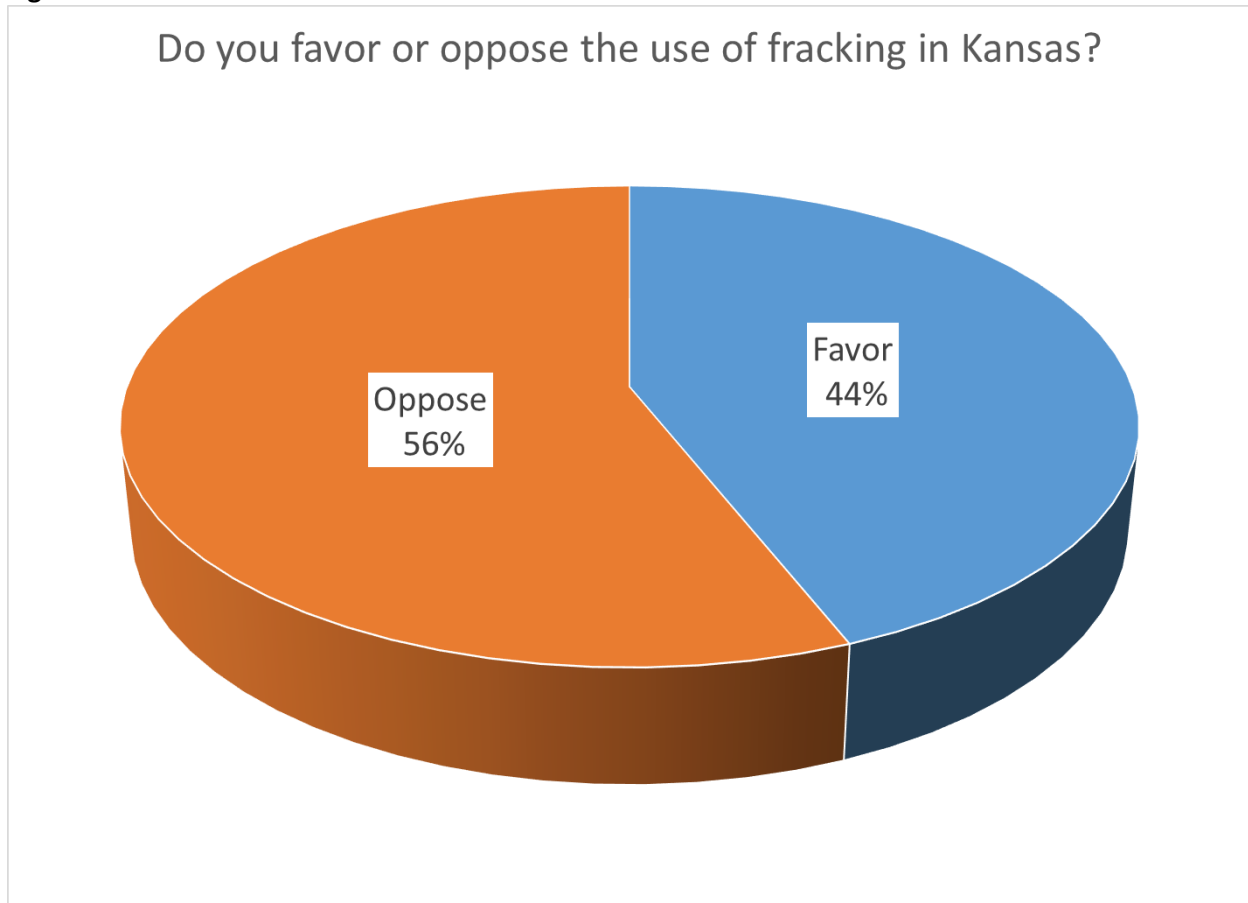
Kansas currently provides legal protection to teachers and administrators from parents filing law suits against them for using controversial classroom materials deemed harmful to their children. Figure 12 shows that over two-thirds (68%) of those who responded oppose legislation that would remove these legal protections, while just under one-third (32%) of respondents support removing the legal protections.

Figure 12



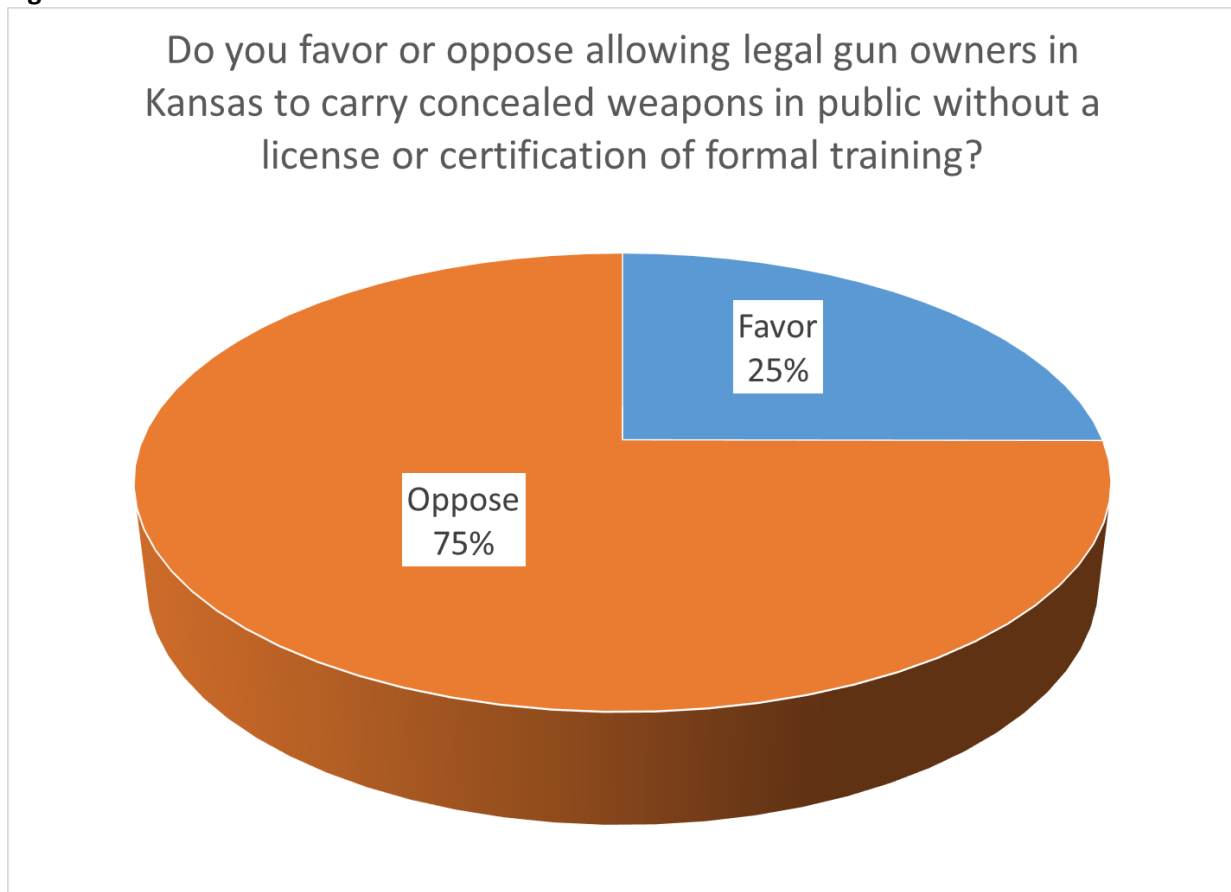
Fracking is a technique for extracting oil and natural gas that has been alleged by some to cause earthquakes and other potential environmental damage. Respondents were asked if they favor or oppose the use of fracking in Kansas. Figure 13 shows that over half (56%) of those responding opposed the use of fracking in Kansas, leaving 37% indicating they favored the use of fracking in Kansas.

Figure 13



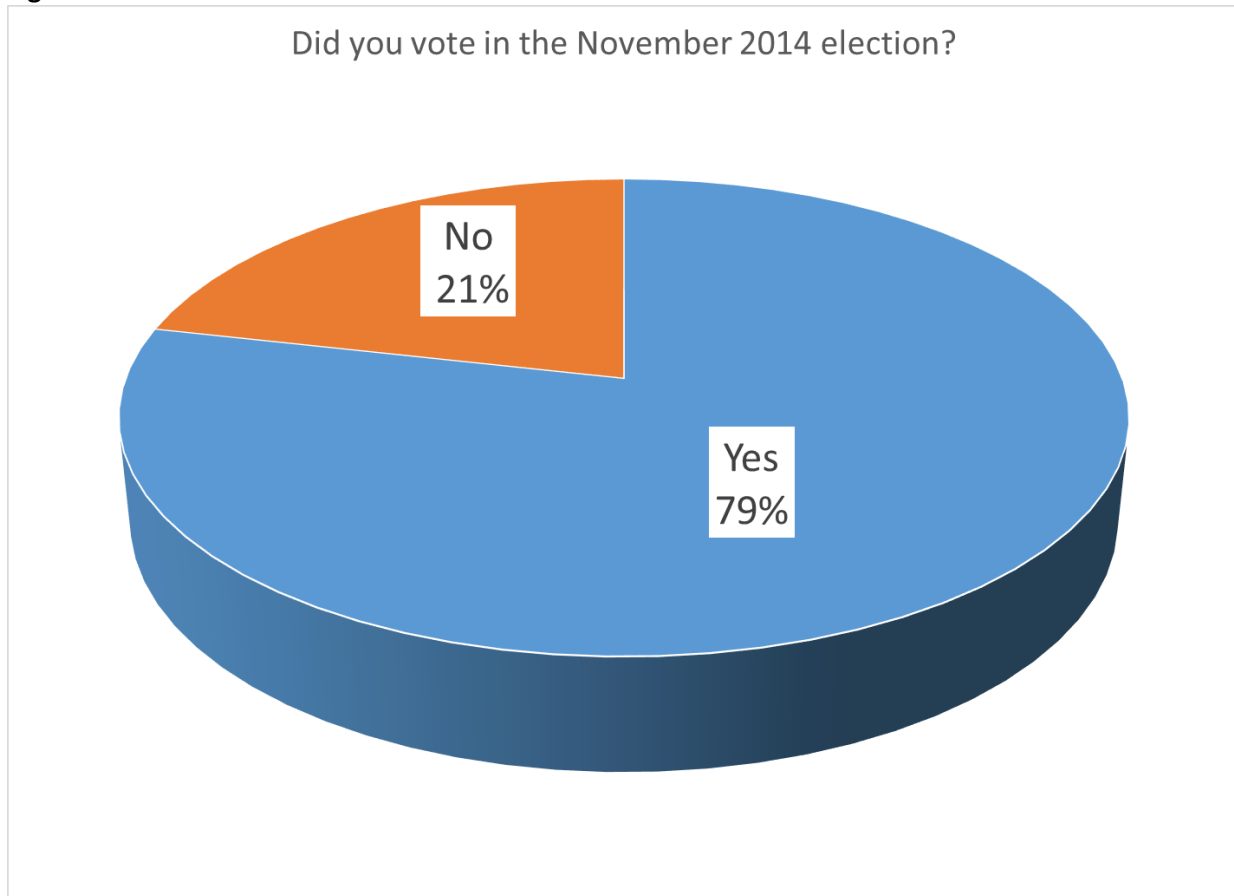
It was recently made legal in Kansas to carry concealed a legally obtained firearm without prior training and certification. Figure 14 shows that, when respondents were asked their opinion on the new concealed carry law, three quarters (75%) were opposed to allowing Kansans to carry concealed weapons without training and certification, while only one quarter (25%) were in favor of allowing concealed carry to any legal gun owner.

Figure 14



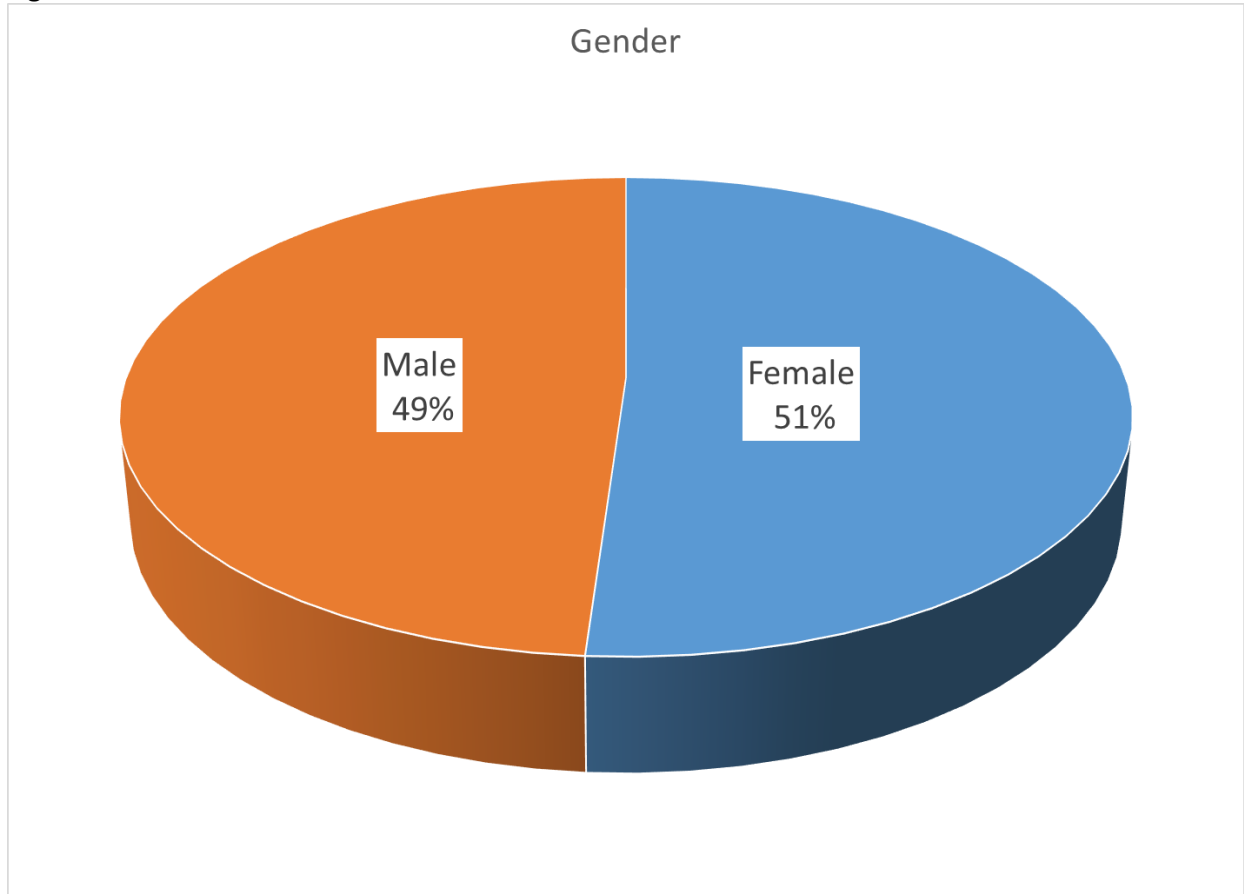
Respondents were asked if they voted in the November 2014 election. Almost four fifths (79%) of those who responded said they voted in 2014. Just over one-fifth (21%) of respondents did not vote in the 2014 election.

Figure 15



The survey sample was comprised of roughly equal numbers of males and females, as is true for the general population of Kansas.

Figure 16



Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Q1

Are you currently residing in the state of Kansas?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q3

How concerned are you that the Kansas economy will seriously threaten you or your family's welfare in the coming year? Are you...

- 1 Very Concerned
- 2 Moderately Concerned
- 3 Slightly Concerned
- 4 Not Concerned
- 8 DON'T KNOW
- 9 REFUSED

Q4

In 2012, the Governor and State Legislature passed legislation that greatly reduced the tax revenues collected, resulting in a 650 million dollar budget deficit for the coming fiscal year. What would be your preference for filling the budget deficit? Would you:

- 1 increase tax revenues
- 2 decrease spending or
- 3 both?

Q5

The vast majority of the Kansas state budget covers public education, social services to the poor and disabled and roads and highways. In which of these three would you favor cutting state spending?

[All that apply]

- 1 Public Education
- 2 Social Services
- 3 Roads and Highways

Q6

The vast majority of the Kansas state revenues come from income tax, property tax and sales tax. In which of these three would you favor increasing taxes?

[All that apply]

- 1 Income Tax
- 2 Property Tax
- 3 Sales Tax

Q7

Tax increases and reductions can be targeted at different people or businesses. Please tell us whether you think taxes on the following groups should increase, remain the same, or decrease.

- .1 In general, do you believe that taxes on the top income earners should be:
- .2 In general, do you believe that taxes on the middle class should be:
- .3 How about taxes on large corporations?
- .4 How about taxes on small businesses (less than 500 employees)?

- 1 Increased
- 2 Remain the Same
- 3 Decreased
- 8 DON'T KNOW
- 9 REFUSED

Q8

The legislature recently passed a school funding bill that will replace the current school funding equalization formula with block grants for two years, while the state attempts to create a new funding formula. The block grants will decrease funding to school districts, but provide them with the ability to spend that money with greater local discretion. Do you favor or oppose this new school funding bill?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 Refused

Q9

The Kansas Constitution states “the Legislature shall make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the State.” Do you believe that the “suitable” level of funding for public education should be ultimately determined by the courts or the legislature?

- 1 Courts
- 2 Legislature
- 3 Other
- 8 Don’t Know
- 9 Refused

Q10

The Affordable Care Act supplements the State’s costs for expanding Medicaid to people who would otherwise not qualify. So far, Kansas and several other states have opted not to expand Medicaid under these provisions. Do you support or oppose Kansas expanding Medicaid under this program?

- 1 Support
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don’t Know
- 9 Refused

Q11

Recent proposed legislation would add increase the tax on cigarettes from 79 cents to \$2.29 per pack. Do you favor or oppose this legislation?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don’t Know
- 9 Refused

Q12

Governor Brownback and the Kansas legislature are also considering raising additional revenues by increasing the state tax on alcoholic beverages. Do you favor or oppose this legislation?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 Refused

Q13

Do you favor or oppose allowing Kansas physicians to prescribe marijuana to their patients for the therapeutic benefits?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 REFUSED

Q14

Do you favor or oppose the decriminalization of marijuana for recreational use, which would give those found to be in possession of a personal amount of marijuana a monetary fine instead of jail time?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 Refused

Q15

Are you aware of any instance where a Kansas public school teacher presented lewd, obscene or otherwise inappropriate material as part of a class lesson?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 Refused

Q16

Kansas currently provides legal protection to teachers and administrators from parents filing law suits against them for using controversial classroom materials that they deem harmful to their children. Do you favor or oppose removing these legal protections?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 REFUSED

Q17

Fracking is a relatively new technique for extracting oil and natural gas that has been criticized for causing earthquakes and other potential environmental damage. Do you favor or oppose the use of fracking in Kansas?

- Favor
- Oppose
- Don't Know/Refused

Q18

Do you favor or oppose allowing legal gun owners in Kansas to carry concealed weapons in public without a license or certification of formal training?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 Refused

Q19

Did you vote in the November 2014 election?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DON'T KNOW
- 9 REFUSED

Qend

That's all the questions that I have. Thank you so much for your time and have a great
_____. [AFTER HANGING UP, SILENTLY RECORD GENDER]

1 Female

2 Male

3 Not Sure